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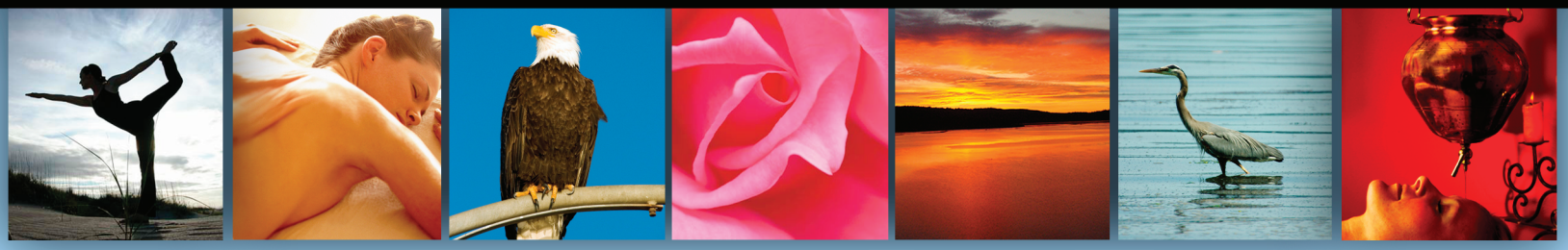

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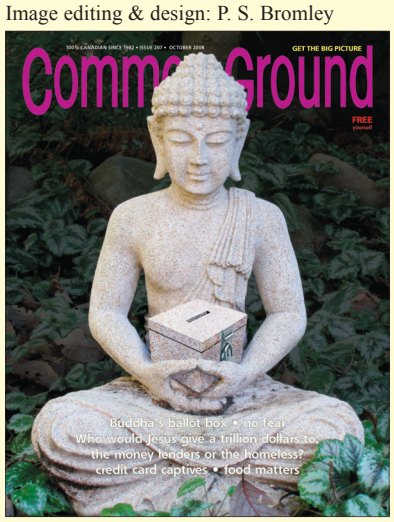
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Give me some truth

by Joseph Roberts

I'm sick and tired of hearing things
From uptight, short-sighted, narrow-minded hypocrites
All I want is the truth
Just gimme some truth
I've had enough of reading things
By neurotic, psychotic, pig-headed politicians
All I want is the truth
Just gimme some truth.
– from *Gimme Some Truth* by John Lennon

I am not happy with this federal election and the way it is being reported. Unimportant, nauseating details are cited while important matters – the politicians' essential character, whether or not they are telling the truth and what they really stand for – get little coverage. These politicians are asking us to trust them with our vote and the power to govern Canada, so, yes, it is important that we know who they are so we can judge for ourselves whether or not they are worthy.

Many party leaders have made themselves available to share who they are as people and politicians. We had the good fortune to interview Stéphane Dion, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, for *Common Ground's* May 2008 edition. We also gladly published an interview with Jack Layton, leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in our June edition. We wanted our readers to have a chance to hear from these politicians directly about who they are and what they stand for. (Read their candid interviews on our website at www.commonground.ca Click on "Archive" at the top of our homepage, then click on the monthly edition and follow to the interviews.)

We had hoped to interview all the leaders of a Canadian political party prior to October 19, 2009, our official election day as prescribed in the *Canada Elections Act*, passed by the current government through Bill C-16, which had its first reading on May 30, 2006. Instead, we are now heading to the polls on October 14, 2008, a full year earlier.

There would have been ample time to interview Elizabeth May, leader of the national Green Party, Bloc Quebecois' Gilles Duceppe BQ, and, of course, Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC). Only one of the aforementioned refused to be interviewed. After a number of emails and phone calls, we were still denied the opportunity to interview Mr. Harper. We would have settled for a candid interview with a next in command, such as David Emerson, who was voted in as Liberal MP, but jumped over to the CPC before parliament even had a chance to sit. Emerson decided not to run again for MP and instead settled for co-directing the CPC campaign across Canada.

The voters here in the riding of Vancouver / Kingsway, where our office is located, still feel ripped off by his disregard for their votes and his refusal to stand in a by-election as a Conservative in order to honour the wishes of the people. We would have appreciated the opportunity to ask him a few questions, but it seems Conservative MPs are trained to not talk to media unless they are reading from the party script – coverage you can readily get from main-

continued p.20…

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Do the candidates have us covered?

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

Wanna talk pharmaceutical politics? Then ask yourself two questions: If a new drug is marketed in Canada, does that mean the government should pay for it? And further, if your doctor prescribes a drug that is deemed essential, should you have to pay for it yourself?

If you're like me, the answer to the first question is "Of course not." There are lots of drugs on the market, many of which either do very little to improve the quality of your life or may even be harmful. We shouldn't expect the public purse to pay for these frivolous drugs, especially when there are already so many other urgent demands for our precious health care bucks. The answer to the second question is the same: "Of course not." In Canada, we don't pay out of our pockets for essential health services like doctor or hospital visits so why would we expect to have to pay for an essential drug?

By the time you read this, we'll be in the final sprint for the election finish line. Even though there have been enough mini-scandals, resignations and apologies to keep a hungry media at bay over the last month, and we have heard a lot about what governments would do about crime, infrastructure and childcare, we've heard barely a word about health care. Certainly, almost nothing about the biggest elephant in the room – Canada's pharmaceuticals budget.

Yet this crazy election season is the most appropriate time to be asking, "How well do Canadian governments, both provincial and federal, provide drug coverage to our populations?" Sadly, we are a pathetic country on that front. A recently released report said that among developed countries, Canada is almost last in terms of its level of public coverage of pharmaceuticals.

It seems that for every dollar that goes towards pharmaceuticals in Canada, about 45 cents come from the government; about 35 cents come from your private insurance plan that you would have as part of your employment if you are lucky (even though you are ultimately paying for it because that money comes off your pay cheque one way or another); and the final 20 cents come out of your pocket. The report stated that we scored a dismal seventeenth out of 18 countries, in terms of public drug spending. In contrast, the UK spend on drugs is more than 80 percent from the public purse.

This is a real shame and obviously an election issue that should have huge prominence, given the fact that, in 2007, spending on drugs in Canada reached $27 billion, a figure that represents almost 17 percent of total health care spending. According to the Canadian Institutes of Health Information, after hospitals, drugs account for the largest share of major health expenditures.

It is criminal if Canadians are doing without life-saving drugs because they can't afford them (though I'm not convinced this is much of an issue). Suffice to say this study provides some evidence that Canadian politicians lack the political will to enact strong, national legislation to pay for our drug costs.

This is certainly not the vision Tommy Douglas had when he established public health care in Canada. Even the Romanow Commission, which is one of the most extensive examinations of Canada's health care system ever undertaken, recommended a national, catastrophic pharmacare program.

Have we seen anything in the last five years? Nada.

The second important statistic to emerge from this study, which also slams Canada as miserly and misdirected on drugs, is a dismal score of sixteenth out of 18 countries, in terms of access to new drug treatments. While that may strike most people as pathetic, I'm a lot more understanding about this one. When you consider the dismal batch of drugs coming onto the market that are deemed "new" and which arrive on the scene with massively inflated prices compared to existing treatments, you're not really missing much.

We've got a situation in which about half the "new" drugs recently approved for sale in Canada – drugs for HIV, cancer, heart disease – aren't recommended for coverage.

Let me explain: the study looked at a comparison of 36 new drugs evaluated for public drug plan reimbursement by all developed countries. Canada's Common Drug Review (CDR) the federal body which decides, based on an assessment of the drug's safety, effectiveness and cost (and makes recommendations whether a new drug deserves public coverage), recommended only 61 percent of drugs for public drug plan reimbursement. Apparently, this is a lot less than the averages of the European Union (EU: 91 percent) and the US at 88 percent.

Most people are thankful that the government does its part to pay for pharmaceuticals. And yet, whether you get access to "new" drug treatments, Canada is apparently not a good place to live. The study was produced by a Toronto health consulting firm and paid for by Rx&D, the association of Canada's brand name drug companies, with the claim that it is the first comprehensive study of its kind evaluating Canada's access to new drug therapies.

Let's talk about the access issue because the drug companies and their surrogate patient groups are always screaming blue murder about the lack of access to new drugs in Canada. We've got a situation in which about half the "new" drugs recently approved for sale in Canada – drugs for HIV, cancer, heart disease – aren't recommended for coverage. The Common Drug Review, a serious contender in establishing proof of evidence when it comes to making decisions about coverage, apparently issued 78 recommendations between 2003 to the end of 2007, giving a positive recommendation only 46 percent of the time.

Even though this study apparently demonstrates that Canada is not keeping pace with other countries, in terms of new drug coverage, it is the lack of public funding overall that I think is the most serious issue.

Where do the various political parties weigh-in on this issue?

We know, for example, that the NDP supports a National Pharmaceutical Program. On his website, Jack Layton says that he "…hears about the prescription problem in every single province he visits." He knows the numbers too; he's aware that between 1992 and 2002, household spending on prescription drugs jumped by more than 70 percent, while over the same period, spending on food, clothing and shelter increased by only 11 percent.

Layton decries the fact that almost 20 percent of Canadians do not have adequate drug coverage and God forbid, if they find themselves in a situation where they cannot afford the medication they need, they would be "…forced to choose between medications or mortgage payments."

What Mr. Layton doesn't say is that many of those drugs that Canadians are paying for may not actually be worth the money demanded at the pharmacy counter, when you know what kind of health outcome they will deliver. However, he's not adverse to a bit of fear mongering when it comes to putting demands on the government. He says access to medication should be based on need. "Canadians want to know that if they get sick and can't afford the drugs they need to survive, the federal government will step in to help." I have to give some

continued p.34…

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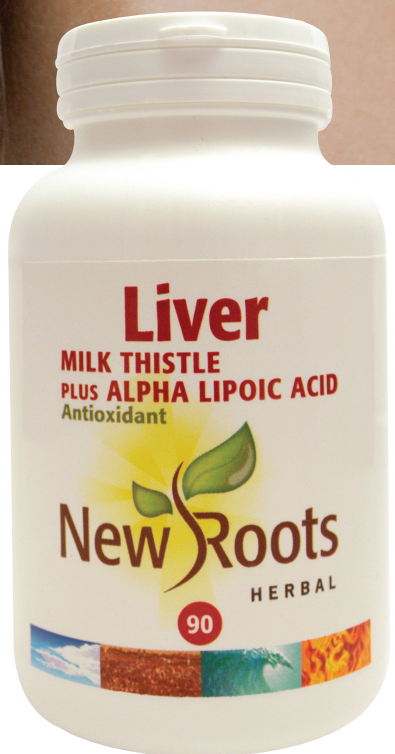

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NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

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Green is also an outstanding choice when it comes to political parties. The Green Party, now rising to well-deserved prominence, recognizes that food choices profoundly affect our health and that of the planet; this fact is reflected in school food policies. The Green Party advocates the labelling of genetically modified ingredients, in line with the desire of many Canadians who prefer GMO-free foods. It also supports the elimination of subsidies for pesticides, thereby permitting organic farming to be more competitive with pesticide-laden foods that are sold at cheaper prices. The Green Party also supports fair trade, ensuring that impoverished farmers receive fair prices.

The Green Party profoundly understands the link between lifestyle and climate change. Taking heed of the thousands of peer reviewed climate scientists who agree that global warming is a real threat, its party platform encourages earth friendly choices for food and transportation. We Canadians want hybrid cars, energy efficient appliances, wind and solar power systems and green building products and the Green Party supports the growth of these industries in Canada.

For Canadians, the issue that has proven to be even more important than driving eco-friendly cars or riding a bike is the food we put into our mouths. Researchers Gidon Eshel and Pamela Martin at the University of Chicago have calculated the carbon intensity of a standard vegan diet and North American carnivorous diet, through production processing, distribution and cooking to consumption. By going vegan, one elects to emit 1.5 tons less CO2 every year than the burger-eater. Choosing a state-of-the-art Prius hybrid over a gas-guzzling vehicle saves just over one ton of CO2 per year. (http://geosci.uchicago.edu/~gidon/papers/nutri/nutri.html)

An average diet that includes meat leads to an annual greenhouse gas production equivalent to driving a mid-sized car a distance of 4,758 kilometres. See below for the correlation between eating various foods and the equivalent distance driven in kilometres. (Source: the Institute for Ecological Economy Research, Germany; study commissioned by independent consumer protection group Foodwatch.) Calculations are based on methane from animals, emissions from food production, manufacturing feed, fertilizer and the use of farmland.

Comparison of dietary choice (for one year) and the equivalent distance driven by a mid-size car:

- Diet that includes meat: 4,758 km
- Vegetarian diet (no meat, fish, poultry): 2,427 km
- Vegan diet (vegetarian with no eggs or dairy): 629 km
- Organic, vegan diet: 281 km.

Vesanto Melina is a dietitian and author of a number of nutrition classics, including The Raw Revolution Diet*, co-authored by Cherie Soria and Brenda Davis. Register for the raw FUNdamentals class with Cherie Soria (Sunday, November 23) at www.rawbc.org or call 778-737-8852. For more great, green energy, visit www.greenparty.bc.ca or call 604-687-1199 or 1-888-473-3686.*

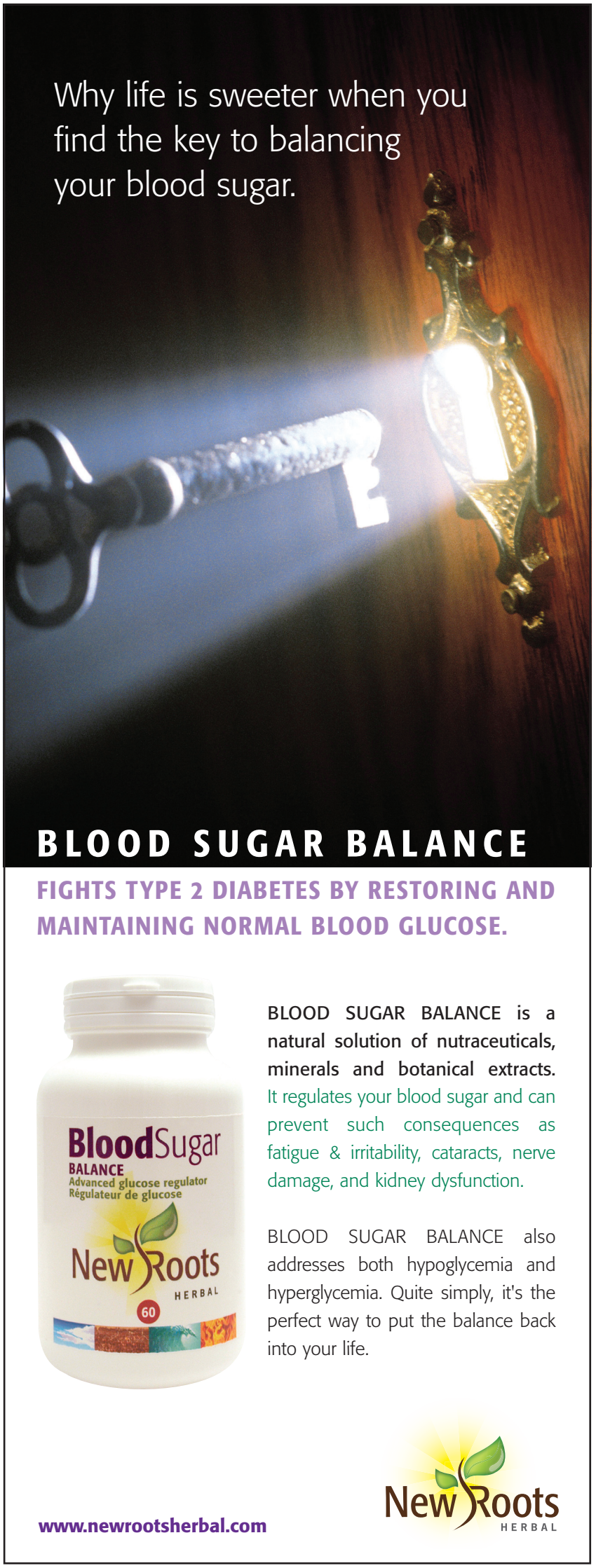
Garden Blend Soup

(Makes 2 1/2 cups)

Of all the foods that support health, dark, leafy greens top the list. Kale, a plant that survives Vancouver winters, offers more nutrition per calorie than almost any other food. This recipe provides protein, vitamins A, C, E, most B vitamins, calcium, iron, selenium, zinc, copper, magnesium and manganese. Vary the flavours to suit your taste. In winter months, use hot water for a warming soup. This recipe is a favourite of Patrick Meyer, Langley's Green Party candidate.

3/4 cup hot water
1/4 cup orange juice, or 1/2 orange, peeled
3 to 4 cups kale, stem removed, chopped
1/2 apple, cored or 1/2 small cucumber, peeled
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, basil leaves or dill weed
1 1/2 tbsp. light miso
1/2 tbsp. lemon juice
1/2 clove garlic
1/4 red jalapeño pepper or a pinch of cayenne
1/2 green onion, optional
1/4 cup sunflower seeds or 1/2 avocado, peeled and seeded

In a blender, process the water, juices, kale, apple, herbs, miso, garlic, jalapeño and green onion (if applicable) until smooth. Add seeds or avocado; blend again until smooth and serve.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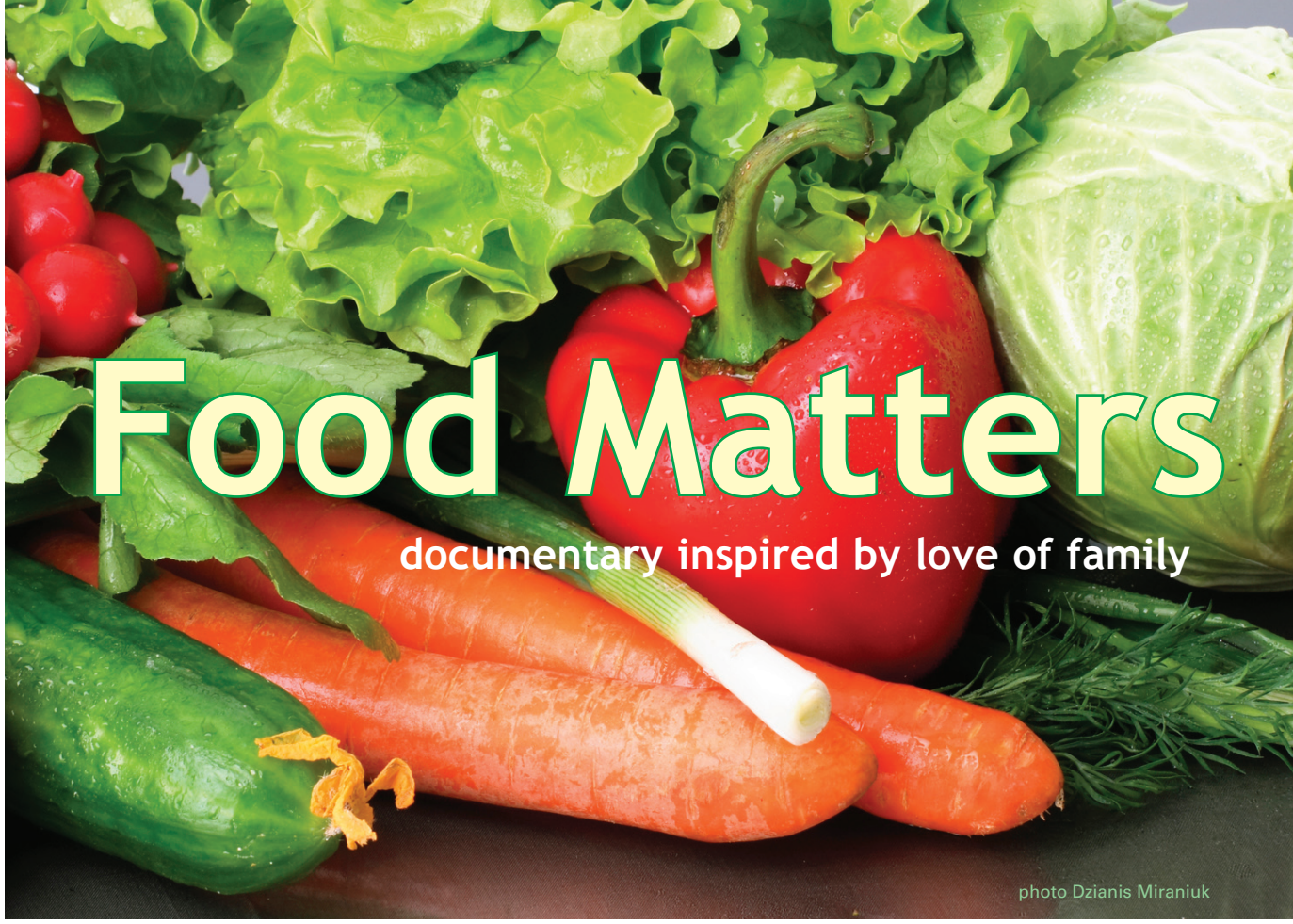

Food Matters

documentary inspired by love of family

photo Dzianis Miraniuk

interview by Joseph Roberts

Despite the billions of dollars of funding and research into new so-called cures, people continue to suffer from a raft of chronic ills and everyday maladies. Patching up an over-toxic and over-indulgent population with a host of toxic therapies and nutrient sparse foods is not helping the situation. In a personal quest of discovery, James Colquhoun and Laurentine ten Bosch set out on an independent mission to uncover the wholesome truth, ultimately producing and directing the documentary film Food Matters.

The film seeks to uncover the business of disease and, at the same time, explore the safe, cheap and effective use of nutrition and supplementation for preventing and often reversing the underlying causative aspects of illness. The Food Matters duo has independently funded the film to remain as unbiased as possible, delivering a clear and concise message to the world – food matters.

Joseph Roberts: What inspired you to produce *Food Matters*?

James Colquhoun: The biggest single motivator for us was personal experience. My father was quite unwell at the time. He was suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, anxiety and depression and not responding well to a raft of medications. He was suffering quite severely from the side effects. That spurred our personal interest in sourcing alternatives for healing and looking at the source of the problem, as opposed to masking symptoms which medications often do.

That led us to study at the Global College of Natural Medicine. We were quite surprised that many others are familiar with the concept that you can eat well to prevent illness. We also discovered that nutritional therapy and detoxification processes can reverse illness – heart disease, diabetes, depression, cancer and mental illness. That was a really big turning point for us and we were quite motivated to inform as wide a population as possible.

JR: Which basic principles did you discover?

JC: Metabolic illnesses play a part in just about every illness that exists – you have an over-toxicity and a lack of nutrients. These can be caused by any number of things, but in order to reverse these illnesses, we need to look at detoxifying the body and replenishing nutrients. Those concepts basically facilitate our bodies to create balance and self-heal. Everyone is familiar with how your body heals itself when you cut yourself or if you have some sort of scar. It's not such a different concept whether you have a cut on your arm or heart disease or diabetes and so forth. Once you restore balance to the body and give it the environment that creates optimum health and balance, it will regenerate and self-heal.

Laurentine ten Bosch: Our society has become so used to instant gratification as a way of life that we always look at the symptoms first – how we can tackle them and the quickest way to overcome them. The pharmaceutical industry knows how to approach the instant gratification society very well. Many of the teachers in our film, however, are looking at how we can resolve the underlying cause, rather than just fixing the symptoms.

JR: How did you get interested in these issues?

LB: A lot of our family was overcome by illness and we'd both been working in fields where we regularly dealt with a lot of people. I was working in the food service industry and we realized that we weren't really looking at what we were putting into people's mouths.

If people support sustainability, organics, biodynamics, sustainable farming and foods that support health, corporations will quickly shift to make sure there's enough supply.

JR: In 2000, Studio D of the National Film Board produced the documentary *The Genetic Takeover*. *Common Ground* rented a theatre and showed the film to hundreds of people. Following the film, we had a Q & A with a panel of spokespeople from Greenpeace, the Society Preventing Environmental Conservation, Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Sierra Club and others.

LB: People are hosting screenings of our film all over the world through the Brave New Theatre platform. We've teamed up with this company and people everywhere can register to host a screening, anywhere – in their living rooms or a community centre or a cinema or a church. [See www.foodmatters.tv/]

JR: That helps build community too.

LB: We've got a lot of screenings in America – all over the East and West coasts –in Canada, even Australia and New Zealand are really coming along. Even places we haven't marketed to like Norway and Tel Aviv and Israel.

JR: What do you feel passionate about nowadays?

JC: We're as passionate as ever about having this message heard by as many people as possible. We believe that if one-tenth of one percent of the world's population watch this film, we can create a shift in conscious awareness surrounding nutrition and natural healing. We would really love our message to be so widely heard that it can create that shift. We'd love to see our film used in conjunction with other media and information sources as a means to shift regulatory bodies and governments. If individuals demand nutritional therapy and ask for these approaches to healing, we can essentially shift the industry away from a sickness-based model to a wellness-based model. It's extremely fulfilling for us to be a part of that process and that message.

JR: Why did you call the film *Food Matters*?

JC: We had a number of other titles for the film, but it actually originated with a comment from David Wolfe, the raw food commentator in the film. During our interview with him, he said that we now realize that food *does* matter; food matters.

JR: What is your position on Frankenfoods?

JC: Our stance on genetically modified foods is similar to that of Arnaud Apoteker, the head of the anti-genetically modified foods campaign for Greenpeace. He says that this manipulation of the environment and of food is a huge biological experiment on a global scale that cannot be controlled and is extremely dangerous. It's a risk we should not be taking. The single most important thing that each country should adhere to is the clear labelling of genetically modified foods. If people had the choice of organic, all-natural foods versus genetically engineered, heavily processed foods and the labels delineated the two, I'm certain they would veer away from Frankenfoods.

LB: We have the same issue in Australia. We've just been notified that our country is now more open to genetically modified foods, which is a big shame for the farmers who are growing organic food and trying to promote it. Although we would have loved to, we weren't able to focus on it in our film; it would have made for a very long film.

JR: Is the government in Australia similar to Canada, in that it is run by very large corporations with a lot of clout?

JC: Every governmental body globally is lobbied by interest groups and the more effective they are, the more they can change legislation in their favour. The most effective ones are those with the biggest pockets, and the companies with the biggest pockets seem to be the agro-chemical companies and pharmaceutical companies. That's why the decisions that are made predominantly support the multi-nationals, whose interests are not necessarily for the health of the general public.

As individuals, we have an opportunity to shift consumer choices. Laurentine and I like to talk about "flirting with your shopping trolley." If people support sustainability, organics, biodynamics, sustainable farming and foods that support health, corporations will quickly shift to make sure there's enough supply. Hopefully, we can create change from the bottom up instead of from the governmental level down. Our focus is on intellectual distribution. We're concerned with distributing good, solid information to as wide an audience as possible. People contact us every day saying this has changed their lives or they've used the information in conjunction with a holistic practitioner to be able to correct their depression or their other illnesses. These sorts of responses are very gratifying.

JR: You provide a forum for many different groups in the film with various approaches to diet – vegetarians and non-vegetarians, vegans, people into raw food. The common thread is that people can improve their health and recover from diseases caused by poor food and lifestyle choices or toxic, environmental poisoning.

JC: Our message is to spread the good news that there are other opportunities for healing outside of the conventional realm for people who are suffering from illness or pain. The more this knowledge spreads, the more people will have access to life-saving information, which is the most fulfilling role we can play.

We're really excited about people taking our message to the world through the platforms we've set up on our website; people can purchase a copy of the film and hold screenings in their local communities. They can also purchase wholesale copies for families or friends. We've had so many wonderful people step up and help with this. We really hope this will continue to create a shift in consciousness about how we interact with nutrition and wellness.

LB: I'd like to add that we started from a grave concern for people who are ill and who don't know where to turn. In America, you get bombarded by advertising. It's a capitalist society and marketing goes on everywhere. We were quite concerned for people who are ill. Doctors don't have time to talk about nutrition and opportunities. They don't have enough time to teach and hold hands.

We looked at the opportunities for people from a truth-seeking perspective – what really works and which modalities are getting results. That's why we're very lucky to have studied at the Global College of Natural Medicine, an independent organization with no government funding so you don't see the influences of the meat and dairy boards and pharmaceutical companies. We were lucky to have these teachers speak to us through the college.

JR: How do people find out about the college?

LB: It's online at www.gcnm.com, based out of Santa Cruz, California. You can study their programs from all over the world. We were fortunate to be able to learn from them. It was these teachers who inspired us.

James Colquhoun and Laurentine ten Bosch set out on an independent mission to uncover the wholesome truth, ultimately producing and directing the documentary film *Food Matters*.

film screening

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Growing a food movement

ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

Food security seems to be on everyone's mind this year. It's fascinating to see so many local initiatives in response to the concern for more local food, so I thought I'd share what it's looking like in my part of the world on southern Vancouver Island.

The year began with a public forum on food security in the Westshore community, which launched a "Grow Tomato Challenge" by giving away hundreds of free tomato seedlings and mapping where they were grown for a future tomato festival to track people's progress. Often, all it takes is one juicy, homegrown tomato to get a person hooked on growing food!

Food markets sprung up in all 13 of the municipalities in Vancouver Island's Capital Regional District. At the end of Bastion Square's Thursday market in Victoria, David Mincey from the Island's Chef Collaborative (an initiative linking chefs with farmers) told me there was not enough food being grown to keep up with the demand. He is astounded by the response to local food at the downtown market. What a great incentive to get more farmers on the land.

Recently, I was bedazzled by the colourful sight of food being grown on the boulevard in the municipality of Fernwood. On Garden Street, not only did one front garden and boulevard overflow with edible plants, but also the vacant lot next door housed several allotment gardens. Around the corner on "Haultain Commons," they were giving away free potatoes and squash from their boulevard garden. What a great way to build community and share resources.

In September, I spoke to an audience at a meeting for the newly established Farmlands Trust (www.farmlandstrust.ca) in the Mount Newton Valley in Saanich. Since February of 2008, people have raised $2.5 million of the $6.25 million needed to purchase 192 acres of Woodwynn Farm and turn it into a community farm that will become a model of sustainable, organic agriculture, providing education and land tenure to new farmers. Preserving farmland for the next generation is the only way to go when you consider that the average age of a farmer in BC is 56.

In the municipality of Oak Bay, the council changed a bylaw to allow the continuation of SPIN farming (Small Plot Intensive) so that Martin Scaia and Paula Scobie could carry on market gardening in 20 gardens. In Esquimalt, the council changed a bylaw to allow chickens in backyards and two women stepped forward to write a manual called *Everything You Need to Know About Backyard Chickens*.

At the Victoria Public Library, I sat on a discussion panel in an overflowing room, where MP Denise Savoie invited people to talk about Vancouver Island's food security. Public forums are the only way to inform all levels of government of our concern for the future food supply, especially when 95 percent of the food we consume on this island comes from off the island.

This past March, I started teaching a 10-month course called Twelve Steps to Sustainable Homegrown Food Production and discovered two amazingly simple ways to build food gardens. Check out "Lasagna Gardening" and "Keyhole Gardening" on the internet. Instead of digging into the ground, you build up from the ground, which means you can grow food with very little effort or expense. These gardening methods turn unproductive spaces into food gardens in a few hours, as they can be planted with food immediately following construction.

"Keyhole" gardens are so easy to build that even children are making them. If you stockpile organic waste materials, such as cardboard, newspaper, leaves, hay, grass clippings, manure or compost, you'll have the necessary ingredients. These gardens provide the healthiest and most productive food because the medium in which it grows is so fertile and rich in micro-organisms.

I have often asked myself what it takes to launch a Grow Your Own Food movement, but I now think we may have already launched one. How's it growing in your part of the world?

Carolyn Herriot is author of A Year on the Garden Path*:* A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide. *She grows She blogs the Organic Victory Garden online at www.gardenwise.ca*

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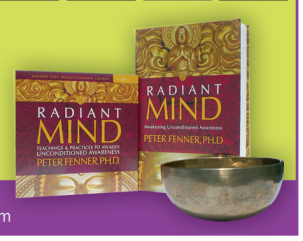

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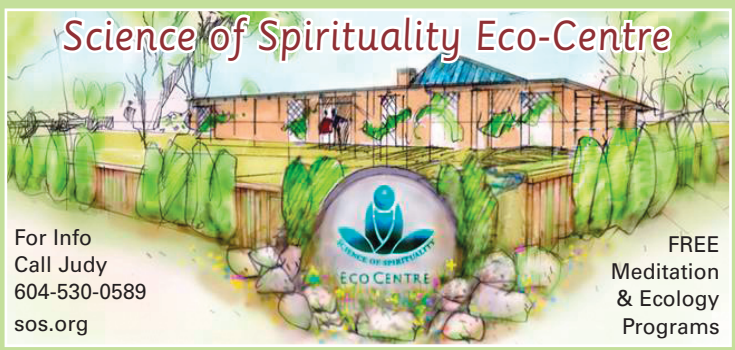

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True surrender

THE POWER OF NOW Eckhart Tolle

SPIRITUALITY

If we always accept the way things are, we are not going to make any effort to improve them. It seems to me that what progress is all about, both in our personal lives and collectively, is not to accept the limitations of the present, but to strive to go beyond them and create something better. If we hadn't done this, we would still be living in caves. How do you reconcile surrender with changing things and getting things done?

To some people, surrender may have negative connotations, implying defeat, giving up, failing to rise to the challenges of life, becoming lethargic, and so on. True surrender, however, is something entirely different. It does not mean to passively put up with whatever situation you find yourself in and do nothing about it. Nor does it mean to cease making plans or initiating positive action.

Surrender is the simple, but profound, wisdom of yielding to, rather than opposing, the flow of life. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now, so to surrender is to accept the present moment unconditionally and without reservation. It is to relinquish inner resistance to what is. Inner resistance is to say "no" to what is, through mental judgment and emotional negativity. It becomesparticularly pronounced when things "go wrong," which means there is a gap between the demands or rigid expectations of your mind and what is. That is the pain gap. If you have lived long enough, you will know that things "go wrong" quite often. It is precisely at those times that surrender needs to be practised if you want to eliminate pain and sorrow from your life.

Acceptance of what is immediately frees you from mind identification and thus reconnects you with Being. Resistance is the mind. Surrender is a purely inner phenomenon. It does not mean that, on the outer level, you cannot take action and change the situation. In fact, it is not the overall situation that you need to accept when you surrender, but just the tiny segment called the Now.

For example, if you were stuck in the mud somewhere, you wouldn't say, "Okay, I resign myself to being stuck in the mud." Resignation is not surrender. You don't need to accept an undesirable or unpleasant life situation. Nor do you need to deceive yourself and say there is nothing wrong with being stuck in the mud. No. You recognize fully that you want to get out of it. You then narrow your attention down to the present moment without mentally labelling it in any way. This means there is no judgment of the Now. Therefore, there is no resistance, no emotional negativity. You accept the "isness" of this moment. Then you take action and do all that you can to get out of the mud.

Let me give you a visual analogy to illustrate the point I am making. You are walking along a path at night, surrounded by a thick fog. But you have a powerful flashlight that cuts through the fog and creates a narrow, clear space in front of you. The fog is your life situation, which includes past and future; the flashlight is your conscious presence; the clear space is the Now.

Non-surrender hardens your psychological form, the shell of the ego, and so creates a strong sense of separateness. The world around you and people, in particular, come to be perceived as threatening. The unconscious compulsion to destroy others through judgment arises, as does the need to compete and dominate. Even nature becomes your enemy and your perceptions and interpretations are governed by fear.

There is something within you that remains unaffected by the transient circumstances that make up your life situation, and only through surrender do you have access to it. It is your life, your very Being, which exists eternally in the timeless realm of the present. Finding this life is "the one thing that is needed" that Jesus talked about.

Surrender is the simple, but profound, wisdom of yielding to, rather than opposing, the flow of life. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now.

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Release attachment

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

Forever is composed of nows. – Emily Dickinson

According to Buddhist philosophy, there are two major causes of all human suffering. The first is attachment and the second is the inability to accept change.

Attachment is when our wellbeing is dependent on things being a certain way. We can become attached to people or possessions and be devastated if we lose them. We may be attached to success, popularity or looking a certain way. Addictions are an extreme form of attachment, but there is likely an addictive component to all forms of attachment.

The inability to accept change is related to attachment. We like things the way they are and experience great discomfort if things change. This does not refer to change we have initiated ourselves, but rather to change that is imposed by others, or by fate.

The reason that attachment and the inability to accept change create so much suffering is because, in this world, change is a constant. Nothing stays the same. So if we become attached, sooner or later we will have to let go. In the meantime, a lot of energy can go into maintaining that attachment and we experience anxiety at the thought of losing it.

Of course, this suffering is all the work of ego. Ego is that part of our awareness that gets so caught up in the story of life, taking on the roles of producer, director and lead character. Ego has an idea of how the script should unfold, and so becomes invested in how others, including the universe, play their parts!

Things will not always go according to ego's plan, but generally ego is not a good sport about it. Think of a football team. The coach has a plan and the players are trained to execute that plan. However, they have little control over what the other team will do, who will fumble or be tackled, or even the field conditions.

A professional, sportsmanlike team will not spend a lot of time blaming others or making excuses for what went wrong. Instead, they look at what they can do to improve their performance and their ability to handle the opposition. They then begin to focus on the next game. They do their best, but there are no guarantees.

Life is much the same. We have our plans, hopes and dreams, but there are no guarantees. Somehow though, it seems harder to view our lives with a degree of detachment. Imagine watching a football game and cheering for your home team. It is so easy to get caught up in the game, feeling elation or disappointment. Now imagine watching a movie in which there is a football game. You know it is not a real game and so you watch with interest to see how it will unfold, but without the same attachment.

This perspective is similar to that of our soul. Soul knows that whatever will be, will be. Soul can already fast-forward to the end of our time here. It does not necessarily know all that will happen, but it knows that much of what aggravates and absorbs ego is ultimately of no consequence.

We are not destined to suffer because we are human. We have the remarkable ability to choose. Choose peace. Choose bliss.

When we tune into soul and really grasp that perspective, there is a sense of peace and release that floods the body/mind. We can relax, surrender and watch how the story of our life evolves. We know without a doubt that everything is in a constant state of change, as are we.

We become centred in the core of our being, rather than in things outside of ourselves. We know that even if everything will not always be okay, we can still be okay.

We cannot know the future, but we can know this present moment. Be fully present, perceiving what is here. Release moment after moment and embrace each new moment as it comes. We are not destined to suffer just because we are human. We have the remarkable ability to choose. Choose peace. Choose bliss.

Gwen Randall-Young is a psychotherapist in private practice and author of Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution. *For articles and information about her books and "Deep Powerful Change" personal growth/ hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca*

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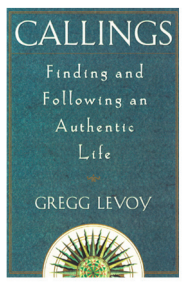

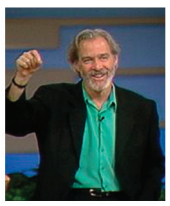

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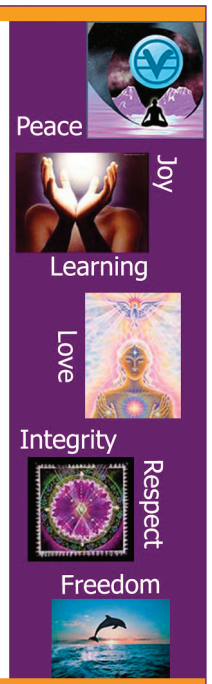

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THE plaSticPRISON

How the credit card industry banks on your ignorance

A crust eaten in peace is better than a banquet partaken in anxiety. – Aesop

by Geoff Olson

In a 2007 *Saturday Night Live* skit, a book-selling huckster appears before a couple sitting at a kitchen table, picking through their credit card bills. "You're not the only ones," he tells them. "Did you know millions of Americans live with debt they cannot control? That's why I've developed this unique program for managing your debt. It's called "Don't Buy Stuff You Cannot Afford!"

The couple struggles with the concept and find it too confusing, even though the book is only a page long. Apparently, this comic confusion is shared by millions in both the US and Canada. In 2007, according to Laurie Campbell, executive director of Credit Canada, the average Canadian over the age of 18 was $80,000 in debt, mortgages included. In 2004, that figure was below $70,000. Since 1990, debt loads have increased sevenfold over income in Canada.

Credit cards are the single biggest factor in all of this increase in debt. While roughly 50 percent of Canadians pay off their credit cards every month, it's the other 50 percent, the ones who do not pay on time, who are of interest to the pound-of-flesh crowd. You could say the bulk of their profits depend on people behaving like Steve Martin's dopey, debt-ridden *Saturday Night Live* character. In both Canada and the US, the avarice of the credit card industry meshes nicely with consumer ignorance. It's a predator-prey relationship of almost Jurassic perfection.

The ignorance is understandable, given our failure as a culture to instruct our youth in personal finance. Young Canadians, who have the least familiarity with high interest rates, are also the most vulnerable to lifestyle sales pitches. Increasing numbers of them use credit cards for impulse purchases, along with groceries and other essentials. The attitude is with the credit card companies offering points, why not put everything on plastic?

Campbell describes the situation as a "tipping point." Students are graduating with thousands of dollars of student loan debt. Unable to pay cash for both essentials and impulse buys, they've turned to credit cards, following their elders' lead. In a telephone interview with *Common Ground*, Campbell noted that, according to figures from 2006, students are coming out of school with an average of $5,000 to $10,000 in credit card debt, on top of $30,000 in student loan debt.

"Our young people are completely uneducated when it comes to financial issues," Campbell says. "They're graduating from college and university with the highest debt loads that graduates have had and they're entering the workforce at incomes they thought would be much higher. Their ability to move forward in life is completely compromised."

Young people can't plan their future, Campbell explains. They can't think about getting married or starting a family or buying a home or even purchasing a car because of debt load. And once young workers start paying with plastic, all it takes is a few missed monthly payments for their credit card interest rate to rise from 18 to 24 percent, in addition to onerously large, added fees. "The ones who can least afford it seem to me to be the ones who are getting hit with these kind of charges," Campbell says.

It sounds like a perfect storm for young consumers. They're at risk of becoming a generation of indentured servants, working to service the God of compound interest, a mysterious being that communicates through invoices and threatening reminders.

And how many readers can say they've even read the contract that comes with their credit card? How many readers can even understand it, for that matter? In the 2004 PBS *Frontline* investigative report, *The Secret History of the Credit Card*, after struggling with the fine print of one such form, Harvard law professor Elizabeth Warren gave up. "I've read my credit card agreement and I can't figure out the terms. I teach contract law and the underlying premise of contract law is that the two parties to the contract understand what the terms are," Warren stated.

Frontline discovered that the terms for some cards include the right of the credit card agency to reset the interest rate at any time. That includes the late payment on any unrelated loans. Stunned credit card holders in the US have discovered a late payment on a car or other purchase can result in a sudden spike in their interest rate.

A grassroots movement in the US is stumping to reign in the credit card agencies' rates and predatory billing practices. In contrast, Canadians simply take their lumps and expect Ottawa to look out for them. Until recently, the Canadian criminal code had capped interest rates to 60 percent annually, but that was abolished in 2007 by the Tory government. The federal government had no intention of enforcing it, "so it decided there was no point in having it in the Criminal Code," Campbell told *Common Ground*. The responsibility was left with the provinces to determine their own caps to interest rates and to apply their own enforcement. Today in Quebec, there is a 35 percent cap; incredibly, Ontario has no cap.

According to figures from 2006, students are coming out of school with an average of $5,000 to $10,000 in credit card debt, on top of $30,000 in student loan debt.

This doesn't mean credit card rates will necessarily rise. It's quite likely the big banks have already used their supercomputers to gauge the sweet spot on the spreadsheet where profit and consumers' ability to pay are maximized.

Investor and financial commentator Ben Stein, a guy who expresses great fondness for credit cards, told *Frontline* that credit card companies hate people like him, who pay their bills off every month. "And I know that because I ran into a fellow I went to high school with on the street and he told me he worked for a credit card company. And I told him about how much I use credit cards and how I pay them off every month, and he said, "Oh, we hate you. We hate you guys. We call you deadbeats."

Frontline examined how this bad craziness began back in the late '70s in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, "a modest town of 140,000 known for its cattle auctions and meat-packing industry." Today, the little town boasts a huge post office, far bigger than its communal needs, but it serves the credit card industry's interests just fine.

South Dakota once had a historic cap on interest rates, known as usury law. To encourage banks to make loans, the state decided to suspend the law completely. New York-based Citibank took notice. At the time, its credit card division was "haemorrhaging money" and New York's usury laws prohibited banks from charging more than 12 percent on most consumer loans. Yet interest rates had gone up 20 percent. "And if you are lending money at 12 percent and paying 20 percent, you don't have to be Einstein to realize you're out of business," Walter Wriston, then chairman of Citibank, told *Frontline*. The bank saw a big opportunity in South Dakota's elimination of the usury law, particularly with a surprisingly well-timed Supreme Court decision that said a bank could export its interest rate to other states. Other US states eliminated their usury laws and more big banks joined the gold rush.

This is why the return address on your credit card bill is often some Midwestern US locale. And the rest, as they say, is history. Or rather, the rest is usury.

Merriam Webster defines usury as an "unconscionable or exorbitant rate or amount of interest – specifically: inter-

illustration by James Steidl

est in excess of a legal rate charged to a borrower for the use of money." The key word here is legal. If the banks do it, and regulators are AWOL, then it's not illegal or immoral by definition. It's just sound business practice, for the lenders at least.

Yet it's remarkable how Christians, including those on the boards of major banks, forget that scripture condemns usury in no uncertain terms. There are a half-dozen passages in the *Bible* damning the practice. For centuries, Christendom got the message. The church outlawed money lending for the flock, leaving it to the Jewish community. This presented a win-win situation for pious Christians, who could condemn the moneylenders even while accepting their loans.

The rise of the mercantile class during the Protestant reformation put a stake into the heart of medieval restrictions on usury, widening the scope for more lenders to join in on the fun. But condemnations of the practice continued. Lexicographer Samuel Johnson noted, "The synonym of usury is ruin." Joseph Addison echoed his words. "A moneylender. He serves you in the present tense; he lends you in the conditional mood, keeps you in the subjunctive and ruins you in the future."

Indebtedness, whether it is personal credit or national debt, always involves a reckoning somewhere down the line. And there is an intriguing connection of the credit card agencies' lending practices to recent events on Wall Street. To explain this, we have to take a trip through the looking glass into the US housing market bubble.

The collapse of the financial houses of Bear Stearns was the first major indication that the US financial/speculative complex is built on sand. The US government recently "bailed out" the bottomless hole that is Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, to the tune of $250 billion. With the subsequent bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers investment bank, and Bank of America's buy-up of brokerage house Merrill Lynch, the free market "shake-out" is turning into a rout. Mainstream economists are now speaking in words more suited to the *Book of Revelation* than *BusinessWeek*.

On his blog, *Global EconoMonitor*, the highly regarded New York University professor of economics Nouriel Roubini insists "this will turn out to be the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression and the worst US recession in decades."

Unlike Vegas, what goes on in Washington and on Wall Street doesn't stay there. In a financial version of the "Butterfly Effect," the stroke of a hedge fund manager's pen in New York can cause riots in Thailand. So what does this bode for Canada? Although there are still some regulatory differences between Canada and the US, particularly in the housing market, the economies of the two nations are tightly coupled. And the secret is wide open in financial circles that the entire US credit card complex, holding some $12 trillion in debt, is in danger of going down with the ship.

The credit card industry is intertwined with the subprime mortgage market. For more than half a decade, subprime loans were made to US citizens with shaky credit and marginal ability to pay. As long as the real estate market kept rising upwards, everything was fine. But the loans were ticking time bombs if the housing market went south, which it did.

Once again, avarice meshed with ignorance. The subprime vultures coached naive homeowners into believing they could have something for nothing – they could refinance by taking out home loans based on their equity and pay off their credit cards at the lower interest rate. What this did was effectively hide trillions of dollars in US credit card debt in the ruinous subprime mortgages. By refinancing bad debt as "good debt," it hid how precarious the situation had become for millions of homeowners. From 2000 to 2007, the loans were bundled into securities and sold across the world to unsuspecting buyers, effectively making the subprime problem the world's problem.

When you combine a $12 trillion credit card debt with the billions in subprime mortgages set to reset at higher rates over the next few years, and the trillions in funny money floating around in derivatives and other cryptic financial instruments, you don't have a bubble. You have a black hole.

In retrospect, it's been one hell of a ride around the black holes' event horizon. On both sides of the border, predatory lenders whipped up the mania for household wealth formation, encouraging homeowners to think of their homes as ATM machines, or better yet, time machines set for an upscale future. Whether it was a sup prime mortgage or a more transparent loan, every other homeowner wanted in, in a bull market that appeared to have the blessing of the Federal Reserve, if not the Almighty Himself.

For the lenders, debt is the gift that keeps on giving. In fact, the same practice that is applied to credit card borrowers has been applied, on a larger scale and with even greater opacity, to loans made by the IMF and World Bank to Third World nations.

In an investment stampede that rivalled the Dutch tulip mania, homeowners never twigged to the original meaning of the word "mortgage." It's from the French for "death pledge" – a financial arrangement until you die.

But in the speculative Never-Never-Land of the last five years, who had time for scepticism? Pop culture got into the act with a whole new genre of reality television, focused on home renovation. Although these cheery, gyprock-smashing entertainments seemed to be about reaping the rewards of hard work, they always had a whiff of petty bourgeois desperation to them. The home flippers were always working fast, praying they hadn't mistimed the sacred housing market.

Interestingly enough, not long after the debut of the home reno shows, a new kind of reality television appeared themed around high personal debt. Shows like *Till Debt Do Us Part* feature financial nannies who counsel couples buried in bills. The ignorance of these folks, many of them weighed under by mortgages and paying for essentials with multiple credit cards, is astonishing, but not untypical. They seem to have virtually no understanding of how compound interest works. They are part of the 50 percent the banks love – the sheep that can be calmly fleeced with usurious rates and exorbitant late payment fees.

Financial advisor Robert Manning, author of *Credit Card Nation*, put it succinctly in an interview with CBC Radio's *The Current*: "The best client used to be someone who could pay off their debts. Today, the best client is someone who can never pay off their debts."

For the lenders, debt is the gift that keeps on giving. In fact, the same practice that is applied to credit card borrowers has been applied, on a larger scale and with even greater opacity, to loans made by the IMF and World Bank to Third World nations.

Beginning back in the '70s, Arab sheiks found themselves flush with credit from OPEC's oil deals. They had literally more money than they knew what to do with and they invested billions of it in US banks. The bankers now had a problem. To whom could they lend this windfall, and make money themselves? They looked around and saw an opportunity for huge mega projects in the Third World: dams, pipelines and all the big-money infrastructure associated with capitalism's good life.

The fact that some of the lendees were corrupt dictators, who pocketed significant chunks of money for themselves and their cronies, was outside the banks' interests. All they wanted was the money back at some point, with interest. So began the great Third World debt crisis, across Latin America, Africa and Asia, with successive governments unable to even service the interest on their interest. This necessitated further rounds of loan arrangements, and often the gutting of social services, along with the privatization of state industries. As Joseph Stiglitz revealed after his tenure as World Bank vice president and chief economist, this miserly misery-creation was simply business as usual for the global loan sharks.

In any case, once you know that the odds are stacked in favour of the house, your attitude to plastic changes. Credit cards aren't just useful in today's highly connected world; it's almost impossible to get by without them. If you make your payments on time, and don't spend beyond your means, they offer no great risk. But if you fall behind, which is damnably easy to do, you are no longer a "deadbeat" to the credit card industry. You are Argentina, Bolivia or Thailand.

In the end, Henry David Thoreau's thoughts on debt still apply today: "That man is richest whose pleasures are cheapest."

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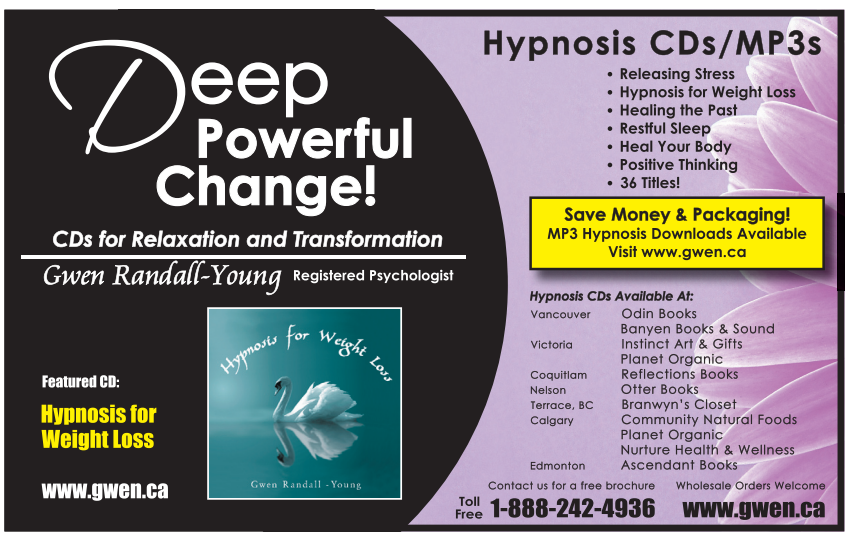

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see page 33

It's time to vote

EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

It's the election season with a vengeance, with the Canadian (October 14), US (November 4) and BC municipal elections (November 15) all happening within a month.

This is great – democracy in action, and all that. This US election is the liveliest and most important in years, with a clear difference between Obama and McCain. Why is it that our Canadian elections, in contrast, often seem so uninspired and flat?

Is it because most Canadians – eh – prefer to occupy the safe, polite middle of the road, rather than stand up for anything with passion and leadership? I don't think so.

Is it because the NDP and the Conservatives plotted to keep the Green Party's Elizabeth May out of the Leaders' Debate and the TV consortium executives wimped out? Yes, that would do it.

Is it because Canada's old-fashioned first-past-the-post system of voting shuts out minority opinions and smaller parties and produces totally undemocratic results, such as two years ago, when the Conservatives formed the government even though 64 percent of Canadians voted against them? Yes, that would also do it.

And how about lowering the voting age to 16 so that young people can get involved and get into the habit of voting while they are still at school?

As a Euro-Canadian, I also find it completely bizarre that, in Canada, the party that wins the most seats forms the government. In most of Europe, where proportional voting ensures that many smaller parties have seats in Parliament and negotiations between parties are commonplace, it is not the party with the most seats that governs; it is the party that can form a majority government.

Thus, in Canada's last election, the Conservatives, with the most seats, would have been invited to form a majority government by making alliances with other parties. If they failed, the Liberals would have been invited to have a go. They would have teamed up with the NDP and we would have had a Liberal/NDP coalition government in Ottawa that commanded a majority in Parliament, giving us a far more democratic and workable result. Why does Canada do it the other way? Maybe there's a constitutional historian among *Common Ground's* readers who can enlighten us.

The childish, abusive, sexist, insulting and intimidating words that MPs hurl at each other could be another factor. Elizabeth May said that when she took her 15-year-old daughter to Question Time in Ottawa, she was totally ashamed of the puerile nastiness of the MPs' comments to one another. This is embarrassing.

Parliament should create a soundproof penalty box, in full view of the cameras. A new set of House rules should outline what is acceptable behaviour. At the first offence, the Speaker would show the MP a yellow card. A second offence would warrant a red card and 10 minutes in the penalty box. For a third offence in the same day, the MP would be banned from the Legislative Chamber for a month.

The Liberals, Greens and NDP are committed to strong, urgent action on climate change. So vote for whichever candidate from these three parties is most likely to win.

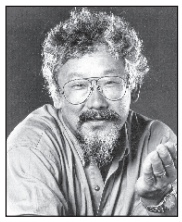
We need the same in the BC Legislature where equally nasty remarks are thrown around in place of intelligent debate. How much do we pay these people, Liberals and NDP alike, to behave in such a manner?

In spite of the above, you may still be wondering who to vote for. My mind is clear. Global warming is a global emergency on the level of World War II and it requires urgent, dramatic action. Set next to other issues, it overwhelms them like the sea-level rise that will flood coastlines all over the world by up to two metres this century, if we fail to act.

The Liberals, Greens and NDP are all committed to strong, urgent action on climate change. The Conservatives are not, so vote for whichever candidate from these three parties is most likely to win. Don't throw away your vote on a weak candidate even if they are running for a good party.

And do vote. Don't tell yourself it's meaningless. We can certainly improve our democracy, but, for now, it's the best we've got.

Guy Dauncey is a writer, speaker and organizer living in Victoria, BC. Among other activities, he publishes the monthly, online newsletter EcoNews. *Sign up at www.earthfuture.com/econews*



Election fever

SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki with Faisal Moola

ENVIRONMENT

With all the elections coming this fall and winter, global warming is bound to spike up with the increased hot air! South of the border, they're electing a president; here in Canada, we're heading into a federal election and in Vancouver where I live, we'll vote for a new civic government in November.

It would be great if the environment didn't have to be an election issue. If all political parties recognized that it is such a critical issue that it should transcend partisan politics, we could vote for our party of choice based on its fiscal and social policies. The goal should be to convince all political parties to make the environment the top priority, rather than to vote for the party with the best environmental record and policies. But the environment is an election issue and, as our situation stands, it should be the top election issue, especially in our upcoming federal election.

After all, if we keep dragging our heels on environmental protection, our economic and social systems will, at best, face increasing stress from the costs of dealing with environmental health effects and diminishing resources, and, at worst, be moot points.

But it's tough for voters to cut through all the rhetoric. Will the Liberals' Green Shift start us on a path toward sustainability or is it just a "tax on everything"? Will the Conservative plan lead to reduced greenhouse gases "while preserving our standard of living and way of life" or will it stall needed action on global warming? What about the NDP's Green Agenda for Canada? What role does the Green Party play?

I can't tell you which party to vote for; I'm not even sure which one I'll vote for. But I can say that it's vitally important for all Canadians to put the environment at the top of the agenda in this election. That means becoming informed about the issues and the various party positions on those issues and asking the candidates some direct questions.

I can tell you what I believe are some of the most important issues. Global warming is at the top of the list. Years of inaction by various governments mean that urgent measures are needed, but it's not a choice between environment and economy. On the contrary, other countries have shown that actions, such as shifting from reliance on fossil fuels and other non-renewable energy to renewable source, create numerous jobs and economic opportunities, as well as reducing carbon emissions. I also believe that putting a price on carbon emissions, through measures such as carbon taxes and cap-and-trade systems, is essential and has been shown to be effective in other countries.

Conservation of wilderness and parklands is also crucial. This is one area where the government has made some positive steps over the past few years. For example, according to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the amount of land protected recently in the Northwest Territories alone was equal to the area of about 25 Prince Edward Islands. But more needs to be done to ensure that these kinds of efforts continue, regardless of which party forms government.

Nowhere is the need for increased conservation more urgent than along Canada's extensive coastline and offshore waters. Although we have the longest coastline in the world, a paltry one percent is currently protected within formally designated conservation zones. Increased protection for our rivers, lakes and oceans should be a priority for the next government.

Of course, those are just a few of the crucial issues. We should also be asking the people who intend to lead us about bulk water exports, clean water, pesticides, health and more.

If we want democracy to work, we can't leave it all up to the politicians. Governments are there to serve us, and so it is up to us to let them know what is important to us and what we believe they must do to ensure that we continue to enjoy the quality of life that so many have worked to build in this country. So get out and vote, but before you do, don't just listen to the candidates; talk to them as well.

Take David Suzuki's Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

I can say that it's vitally important for all Canadians to put the environment at the top of the agenda in this election.

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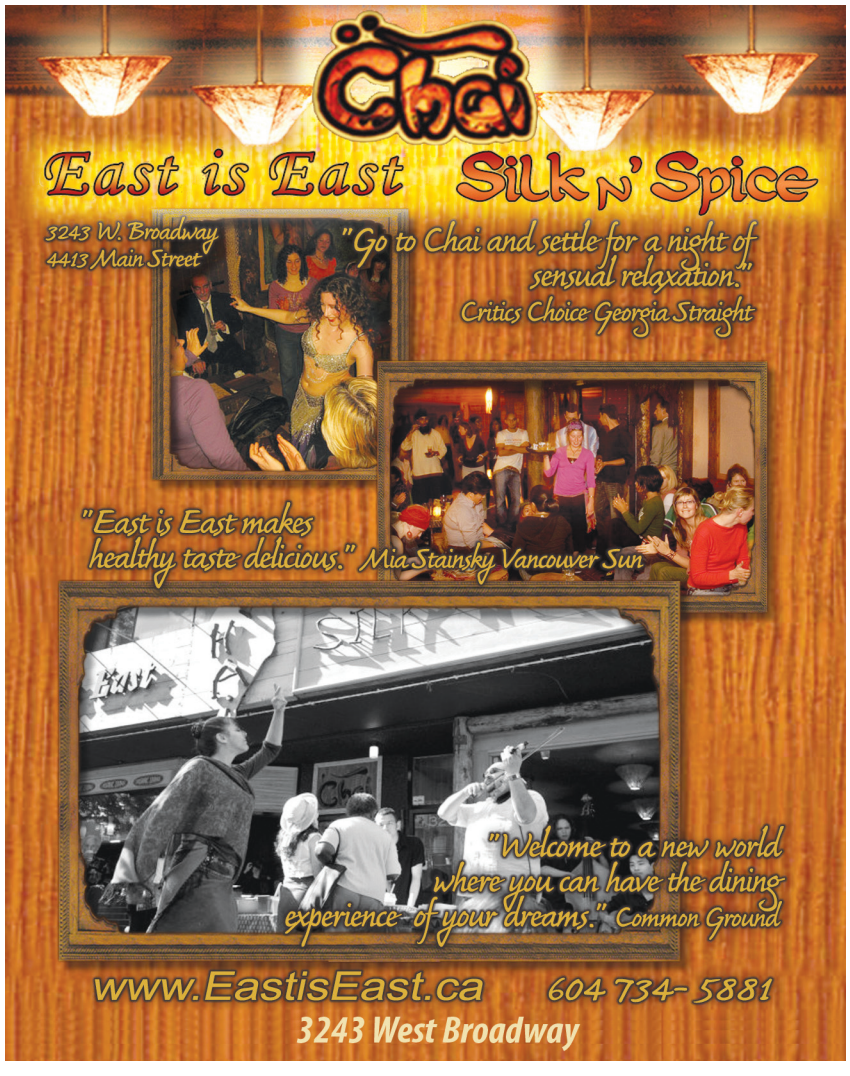
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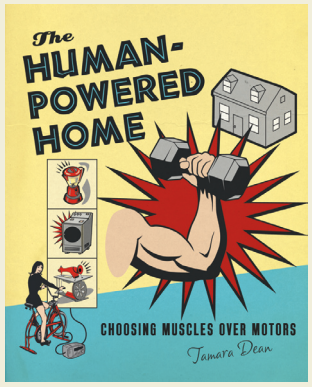

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stream media. So with the snap election called, we ran out of months to interview those remaining leaders who were willing to go public in *Common Ground*. My apologies to those leaders we would have interviewed. We believed the official election date would have been honoured, in which case each of you would have had your month to let our one-quarter million readers know who you as a person, why you got into politics and what your vision is for Canada.

As a replacement for an interview with Prime Minister Stephen Harper or his next in command, please find below portions of a speech by the Honourable Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. Premier Williams spoke his mind about Stephen Harper at the St. John's Board of Trade on September 10, 2008.

"While I am on the topic of our federal government, allow me a few words on the federal election and the very dire consequences that could face us should Stephen Harper and his right-wing Conservative-Reform Party form a majority government in the coming weeks.

First, let me remind you that Stephen Harper as Opposition Leader, together with the Conservative Newfoundland and Labrador MPs, voted against the Government Bill that gave us the two billion dollar Atlantic Accord cheque. 'Trust us; we know what we're doing,' they said at the time. Thank goodness we didn't take them at their word back then. On top of that, we now have the 10 billion dollar broken promise on the removal of non-renewable resource revenue from the equalization formula. This promise was made in the past two elections in writing, in their campaign platform and in subsequent letters. And let's face it folks – regardless of our recent financial well-being, that 10 billion dollars would have made a huge difference to the bottom line of our province.

But now, all of a sudden, because we have finally achieved some self-sufficiency, we should forget the promise. Or so say Conservative candidates. After all, God forbid Newfoundland and Labrador get what is rightfully theirs as partners in Canada. We have put up with that attitude in this province for 55 years and look where that has gotten us in the past.

Stephen Harper's own campaign literature proclaimed, 'There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept.' He used these words as he successfully attempted to woo voters from this province to not vote for the opposing party.

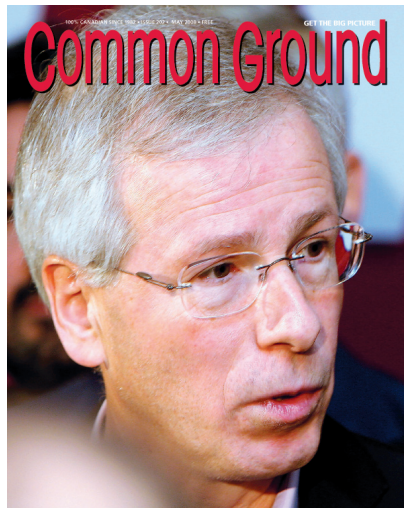
Naively, we trusted him. He rewarded that trust with a broken promise. According to his own brochure – he is a fraud.

I think you all know my views on this issue and I firmly believe that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at home and abroad still feel the same cold, sharp sting of betrayal at the hands of our country's leader.

Other commitments were also made by Stephen Harper that were not kept – 5-Wing Goose Bay; custodial management; a Lower Churchill guarantee and numerous others.

We all know that these promises are sadly not worth the paper they were written on and the bond of his word is meaningless.

The raising of rates at Marine Atlantic in times of high gas prices, poor service and inaction on badly needed vessels is another example of their attitude to isolate the island, which creates more economic hardship on small rural businesses.



If Harper is prepared to slash program spending with large surpluses and break his written word as the leader of a minority government, the future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and indeed all Canadians, will be very bleak under a Conservative majority.

Do not let Stephen Harper turn your focus onto a green shift in his attempt to turn your focus away from the Conservative's *blue shaft*.

His list of broken and unfulfilled promises portrays a lack of integrity in his character and shows us he cannot be trusted.

This is a federal government willing to not only break their own promises, but they go so far as to break their own laws and call an election even though they mandated fixed election dates.

There is nothing Harper will not do to win a majority government.

This is a party who purportedly offered a terminally ill MP a life insurance policy to get his vote. How low can you go?

This is a man who wants an election before losing by-elections that were to have taken place this month.

A man who wants an election before the economy declines any further due to fiscal mismanagement.

He wants an election before findings are released on various ethical breaches against his government.

It is so critically important that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador let Stephen Harper know that his treatment, his attitude, his indifference to this province is not acceptable.

When I met with him to offer a com-

promise, he told me face-to-face that he does not need the people of this province to win an election. So, let's let him know that we don't need him either.

His own candidates and MPs admit that the promise was broken, but we should forgive and forget. Well folks, forgiveness may be a virtue; but forgetting is just plain foolhardy.

In the very words of Stephen Harper's own candidate in St. John's East just a year ago, 'Given his handling of equalization, who can trust the Prime Minister anyway?'

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we need to ask ourselves is it ok for the man occupying the highest office in our country to treat a province in this federation with such distain?

We should show him we don't put up with that in Newfoundland and Labrador anymore.

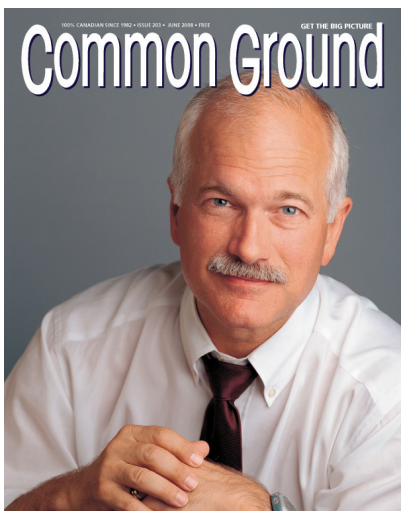
Vote anything but conservative.

Even his own candidates say they don't trust him. So why should you?

How does it make us feel when the Prime Minister of Canada invites backbencher Newfoundland and Labrador MP Fabian Manning into the front bench in the House of Commons to smile and laugh along with him, as he openly mocks this province upon delivering the best budget in its history?

It was a betrayal that was felt deeply across this province as another MP put Ottawa ahead of province.

Stephen Harper's ideology has been cleverly hidden and implemented quietly as much as possible in the past four years.



And the only reason we have not seen his full plan for Canada implemented is because he had a minority government to keep him in check.

I can only say this, and I say it with all sincerity and genuine concern for our great country: A majority government for Stephen Harper would be one of the most negative political events in Canadian history.

Even without a majority, he has cut funding for minorities.

Cut funding for literacy.

Cut funding to students.

To volunteers.

To museums.

To arts and culture groups right across the country.

His government cut funding to women's groups.

In fact, his government actually went so far as to remove the federal mandate to advance equality for women.

This all happened under a minority government. What in heaven's name will happen if he gets his majority government?

And make no mistake – you won't hear Stephen Harper admit he may win a majority government because he is terrified that people might stop and actually start to think about the consequences.

Well, I beg you all today. Stop. Think. And decide if that is what this country deserves?

When we vote, I would rather that we stand on the solid ground of principles than on the shaky ground of broken promises.

If you believe the country deserves better, you know what to do. It is *as easy as ABC*."

(For more information, visit www.anythingbutconservative.ca)

Abandoned voters in David Emerson's riding have followed suit and launched the West Coast version of Anything But Conservative (ABC).

It has been difficult for me to write this month's editorial. The incessant, fear-inciting crap on TV, and in other sources of mass media, has a corrosive effect and as much as I might wish, I am not immune to the toxicity of this onslaught of propaganda. But I had to pay attention and respond to these issues. As Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for evil to succeed is that good men do nothing."

So what is weighing heavily on my heart? This 12-month too early, unwanted Canadian federal election, the third in four years. It is especially galling as the new Prime Minister passed Bill 16, thereby creating a fixed election date that would no longer be at the whim of an opportunistic PM. Well, parliament may have passed the law, but Stephen Harper, unable to blame the election on a NPD or Liberal non-confidence vote, decided himself that he lacked confidence in the government. He told the Governor General to dissolve parliament and called a snap election.

There are many speculations as to why Harper leaped for an election at this time. A few educated guesses follow, and we can only guess because he was unavailable for comment. 1) The polls show that the Conservatives are ahead – hey, it's an opportunity. 2) With Barack Obama looking like a winner in the US presidential race, Stephen Harper's pro Bush, Oil and War would be awkward for Conservatives up North. 3) Remember when the RCMP raided the CPC headquarters for inappropriate election expenses? The

continued p.22...

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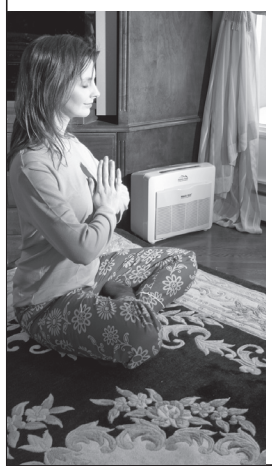

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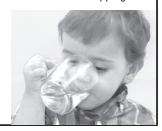

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...continued from p. 21

CPC now has its own scandal brewing as the "In/Out" election kickback scheme, which could have the same damaging effect on Conservative re-electablity as the Gomery Inquiry had for the Liberals. In the last election, Canada voted to "kick the bums out" because of what was seen as cronyism and corruption while the CPC accusers stood pure as the driven snow. Harper did not want to wait for the results of his party's own RCMP investigation before the next election. 4) There were a number of by-elections slated for this month that may have not left the CPC in a popular light. 5) The subprime and Wall Street "bail out" / give-away / taxpayer rip-off economic crisis brewing in the USA would certainly stink up the Canadian economy and not look pretty for an election if it was held on the designated, lawful date in 2009. Harper is too greedy for power and is too afraid of what the CPC might lose to wait for the celebrated National Election Day. Except for Harper and his handlers, this is the election nobody wanted. Given the way Harper has acted as if he had a majority with the minority, we should all be concerned with what he would he do if he snatched a majority.

Going south on the bailout

I write this as the US congress staggers to comprehend the real issues behind the $700 billion protection rack, AKA bail out for Wall Street and the banks. On September 29, I was delighted to see Congress vote against the mugging of America and say no! The taxpayers ought not to be rushed into generations of debt because a former Wall Street CEO was appointed by Bush a few months back to sell their latest con to congress. The same level of thinking (and ethics) that created the problem is not the same level of thinking (or ethics) needed to create the solution. In fact, we need different people with higher morals and a dedication to the American taxpayers to figure out a real solution that helps homeowners and Main Street. They are certainly not the same people who created the chaos in the first place. The markets will correct themselves, as painful as it will be to the money trust and the bank cartel, AKA the Federal Reserve. The Fed, whose members are very big private banks joined at the hip with the federal government, makes it look like they care about taxpayers. For more background go online and read G. Edward Griffin's *A Second Look at the Federal Reserve*.

Many great thinkers are writing about this cash-for-trash hustle. In his article, *US taxpayers are being enrolled in an economic chain gang*, posted at www.telgraph.co.uk on September 25, Jeff Randall quotes Thomas Jefferson: "To preserve their [the people's] independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our selection between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude… Banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies."

According to Randall, "having failed to deliver victory in the War on Terror, President Bush is hoping for better luck in the War on Error…Toxic rubbish will not be made to disappear by Mr. Paulson's [Henry M. Paulson, Jr. is Secretary of the Treasury] proposals. All that will be different is ownership. It will be like removing nuclear waste from a failing business and parking it in a government building. The risk moves from private to public… Mr Paulson's sales pitch is essentially: 'American capitalism, I love you! But we only have 14 hours to save the Earth!'… Which brings us back to Jefferson. Two hundred years ago, he demanded: 'The issuing power should be taken from the banks and restored to the people to whom it properly belongs.' Twas ever thus."

Writer Mike Whitney nails it in his article "Trouble in Banktopia" posted at www.informationclearinghouse.info/article20883.htm on September 27: "The Fed's rotating loans are just a way to perpetuate the myth that the banks aren't flatlining already, Bernanke [Ben Bernanke is Chairman of the Board of Governors of the US Federal Reserve] has tied strings to the various body parts and jerks them every so often to make it look like they're alive. But the Wall Street model is broken and the bailout is pointless… The bailout has galvanized grassroots movements which have flooded congressional faxes and phone lines. Callers are overwhelmingly opposed to any bailout for banks that are buckling under their own toxic mortgaged-backed assets. One analyst said that the calls to Congress are 50 percent 'No' and 50 percent 'Hell, no.' There is virtually no popular support for the

continued p.30...

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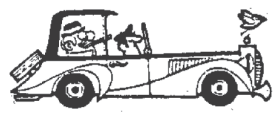

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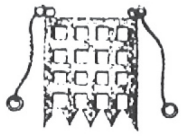

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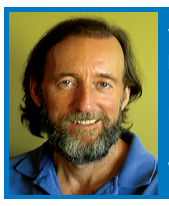

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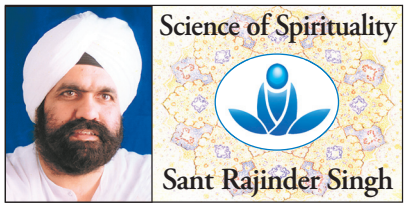

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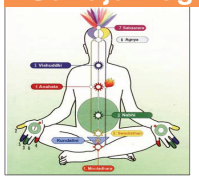

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...continued from p. 22

bill" (the 700 billion bailout bill)… Surely, the cure for hyperbolic credit excesses and reckless behaviour cannot be more of the same… The worthless assets must be written-down, insolvent banks must be allowed to go bust, and the crooks and criminals who engineered this financial blitz on the nation's coffers must be held to account."

I could not say it any better myself.

A grassroots middle America pressured their congress to do the right thing and defeat the dastardly bill. A big thank you to those who had the courage to vote against the 700 Billion Dollar Bailout hidden within the patriotic sounding Bill title: *To amend the Internal Revenue code of 1986 to provide earnings assistance and tax relief to members of the uniformed services, volunteer firefighters, and Peace Corps volunteer, and for other purposes.*

The vote went as follows:
Democrats: Yes: 140, No: 95, 1 NV
Republicans: Yes: 65, No: 133, 1 NV
President: no vote NV
Totals: Yes: 205, No: 228 with 2 NV

From http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll674.xml See the website for the final vote results and how each member voted. It is unclear as to how either McCain or Obama voted because their names are not on the Roll Call. Possibly, they were the 2 NVs who did not vote.

Access denied

On May 2, 2008, CBC News published the piece entitled *Tories kill access to information database.* The following has been excerpted from that report: "The federal Conservatives have quietly killed an access to information registry used by journalists, experts and the public that users say helped hold the government accountable. The Coordination of Access to Information Requests System, or CAIRS, is an electronic list of nearly every access to information request filed to federal departments and agencies.

Originally created in 1989, it was used as an internal tool to keep track of requests and co-ordinate the government's response between agencies to potentially sensitive information released. "It was really a tool designed to make government more open," said CBC investigative journalist David McKie. Public Works, which operates the database, spent $166,000 improving it in 2001. Federal officials in 2003 had been working on a publicly accessible online version.

Fixed elections date

Bill C-16, an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, was introduced in the House of Commons and received first reading on May 30, 2006. The bill amends the *Canada Elections Act* to bring in fixed election dates at the federal level in Canada. It provides that, subject to an earlier dissolution of Parliament, a general election must be held on the third Monday in October in the fourth calendar year following polling day for the last general election, with the first general election after the bill comes into force to be held on Monday, October 19, 2009.

The issue of fixed election dates – or elections at fixed intervals – has been discussed at some length and acquired certain popularity in recent years. Fixed election dates are part of a general package of measures designed, it is argued, to make Parliament more accountable and democratic. Part of the reason that many people have embraced this issue is that it is seen as a way of counteracting the pervasive cynicism that exists towards politics and politicians.

So here's to living in interesting times. And please do your own research and go vote. This looks like the most important election in Canada's short history. It may decide whether or not we continue to have a country or become a toss-away colony of the Empire.

Blue Gold and other VIFF gems

FILMS WORTH WATCHING Robert Alstead

In recent years, there has been a spate of documentaries on the subject of water – its increasing commodification and the greed, corruption and mismanagement surrounding it.

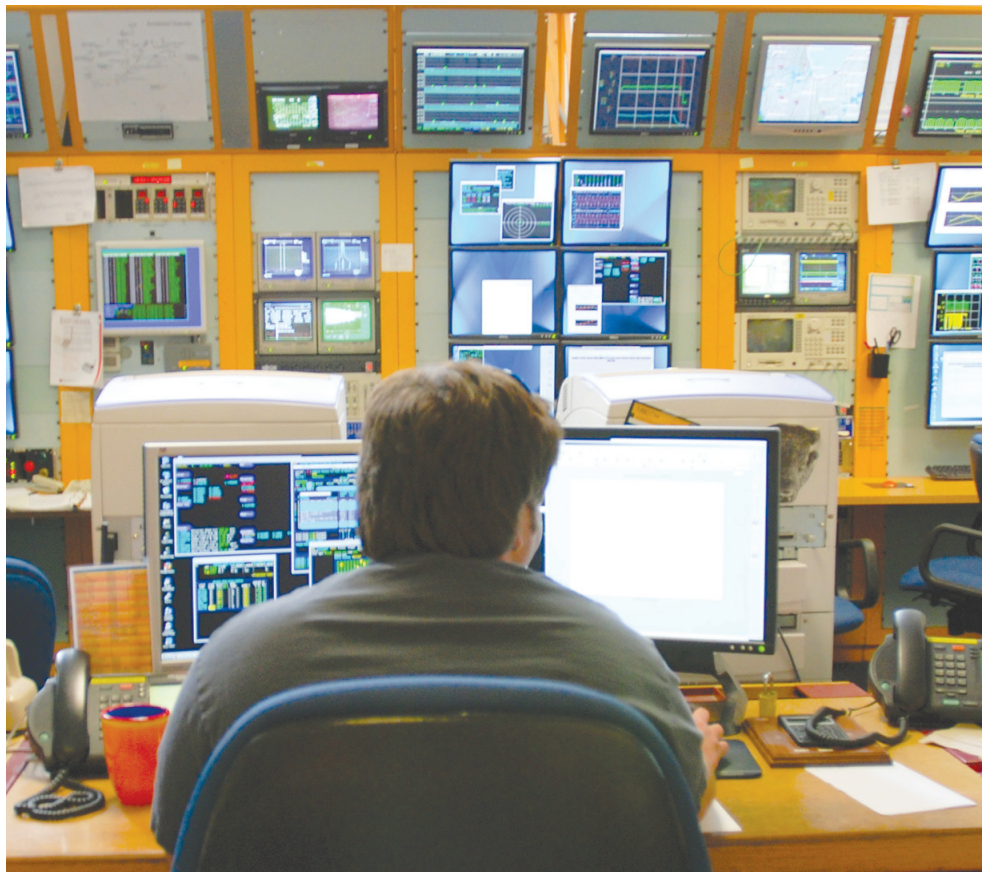
At the heart of Sam Bozzo's *Blue Gold: World Water War*s (at VIFF October 9 and 10) is a strongly held belief that access to fresh water should be a basic human right. Partly educational, with fine little animations explaining how the water cycle works, it's also a plea to recognize the scale of the problem. Many salutary examples of water privatization are paraded, from the violent ruptures in Bolivia when government ceded its water rights to Bechtel, to grassroots actions in the US that have had mixed success in combatting corporations tapping their water supplies.

The film depicts how, in the world of supply and demand, drought and water pollution are good for big business but bad for the environment. Consider the carbon footprint of desalination plants and truckloads of water criss-crossing the continent, for example. Lest it all become too depressing, the film knits together some good-news stories, such as the story of Ryan's Well (www.ryanswell.ca) and stories of how denuded water systems are being recovered.

Blue Gold doesn't always get the facts right – water privatization didn't happen throughout the UK; Scotland and Northern Ireland's water services remained publicly owned due to grassroots opposition – but it identifies disturbing patterns that we should all pay close attention to.

A flurry of recent media coverage over the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Switzerland shone a spotlight on the 40-year-old search for the hypothetical "Higgs boson," a "God particle" that physicists hope to eventually discover by smashing particles together at very great speeds, in complex and expensive particle accelerators. The documentary *The Atom Smashers* (October 4, 5, 8) picks up with a US team at the Fermilab laboratory; the team has been working in this field of research for many years as the LHC prepares to come online. As the Bush government slashes away at its budget, Fermilab's physicists are feeling the pressure to win this subatomic space race.

It's not exactly clear what millions of dollars of publicly funded research has achieved, which is hardly surprising given the opaque nature of high energy physics, but it also leaves scientists struggling to justify the huge expense in lay terms. Directors Clayton Brown and Monica Long Ross make effective use of black and white animation to explain the workings of the Tevatron, Fermilab's four-mile tunnel, where the particle smashing takes place. Broadening the focus to include the private lives, aspirations and setbacks of the physicists in Fermilab's program adds a touch of human interest, underscoring the big question of why science, in general, has lost its value in Bush's US. It seems that science is facing a serious image problem, however, the answer to the problem seems as elusive as the Higgs boson, itself.



A laboratory scene in *The Atom Smashers.*

Other VIFF films that look worthwhile include *Let the Right One In* (October 5, 6, 8), a genre-bending horror that has been getting great reviews on the festival circuit; *Tokyo!* (October 8, 9), a trio of films set in the Japanese capital by three very capable directors (Michel Gondry, Leos Carax, Joon-ho Bong); *I Am Good* (October 1, 7, 9), a light comedy from Czech director and VIFF regular Jan Hrebejk, who always impresses with the fullness of his characters; and the closing film *The Class,* a high school drama set in a poor multicultural Parisian suburb. The film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes this year.

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver-set bicycle documentary You Never Bike Alone*, available on DVD at www.youneverbikealone.com*

Exciting times

THIRTY SOMETHING *Ishi Dinim*

Basically, I'm going to be a dad – possibly, the most important elections in my life are coming up and the spinning ball of joy is within my reach.

There are three things on my mind these days: babies, politics and basketball. I'm feeling pretty upbeat about all of them too. I've got a little one set to arrive in around one moon's time. There are multiple elections with serious ramifications that I imagine are going to end up the way I would like them to – well, except for the federal Canadian one. And basketball continues to bless our world with the many gifts it can offer.

Basically, I'm going to be a dad – possibly, the most important elections in my life are coming up and the spinning ball of joy is within my reach.

Lately, I've been spending a great deal of energy sprucing up our nest. It's funny how such a small person can take up so much space in our minds, and now, in our home as well. There are so many questions about our world and what it'll be like when our child grows into it. I know that in our own small way we are doing what we can to encourage our future to be dignified and healthy. I can't help but feel hopeful that we are collectively making positive changes in the face of major calamities. Even slow-moving structures like government are realizing that we need to advocate for our planet. Every choice we make has an effect and our children will dwell in our choices until they can make their own.

I'm not saying that making a choice to live more sustainably is always easy or fun, but it is necessary. It can sometimes make your head hurt trying to anticipate all the ramifications of what it is you're about to do or not do, following a decision down its multiple, possible paths.

The general rule I'm following these days is *less is more*. I believe that the cure to our ills generally lies in controlling our ego and disallowing it to consume more than we need.

Here's to getting real cozy with people you love and taking some time to just be. Good luck; I know I'm going to need it.

Films worth watching:

Redbelt
Burn After Reading
Pineapple Express

Internet time well spent:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CmvDQK3k2w

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently, he is doing what he can for himself and the planet.
contact: ishi@yahoo.ca

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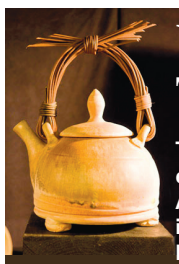
Sat Nov 8 @ Main & 14th 2-3:30pm



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OCT 7
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OCT 8, NOV 15
The Secret of Spiritual Wisdom on Relationships: Free workshops presented by Eckankar. Oct 8: 7:30-9pm, Presentation House, N. Vancouver. Nov 15: 1:30-3pm, Centre for Peace, Vancouver. Info: 604-878-3371, www.eckankar-bc.ca

OCT 9
Revolutionary-energy book launch, **Breakthrough Power** by Jeane Manning & Joel Garbon, downtown public library Alice MacKay room 7 pm, everyone welcome. www.breakthroughpower.net

OCT 11
Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: Saturday, 7-10pm. Introduction for personal experience of insight/healing from your Nature Spirit Totem guardians. At Vancouver Multi-Cultural Society, 1254, W. 7th. By donation. Earthsong Healing Circles. 604-418-9636. www.shamanichealing.info

OCT 12
"Transformation of Man" series; Tape 6 of 7 with Krishnamurti-philosopher, Bohm-physicist, Shainberg-psychiatrist. 4 PM, open dialogue 5:15-7:15. MacMillan Planetarium lounge. Donation. (Final showing Nov. 9). Information: 604-734-7774.

Oct 14 & 15
FoodMatters film two public screening followed by discussion with Q & A. Vancouver: Ridge Theatre, Tuesday, Oct 14, 7 pm. Victoria: Delta Ocean Point Hotel Ballroom, Wed, Oct 15, 7pm. Co-sponsors: Common Ground, Orthomolecular Health, CHFA, CAND, Vitamin Shop, Planet Organics, Lifestyles, Nutrition House, with special guest Dr. Abram Hoffer (at Victoria showing only).

OCT 15 & 30
Benjamin Creme, author and esotericist talks about the emergence of Maitreya, the World Teacher. Video presentation 7pm. YWCA Hotel, 733 Beatty St., CANFOR Room, Vancouver. Donations welcome. No pre-registration necessary.

OCT 16 – 20
Australian Bush Flower Essences Workshops Level 1-October 16th & 17th Level 2- October 18th & 19th Women's Wellbeing and Bush Flower Essences - October 20th * History of Flower Essences * Understand how emotional patterns affect your health * Learn how to make a Flower Essence Vancouver,BC Contact Lori - www.ausangels.com or 1-866-477-6779

OCT 16, 18, 21, 23, 25
Silva Method Hands-On Workshop: Think out of the box. Free yourself. Unleash intuition, creativity, self-efficacy. Develop mental focus. Relief from stress, anxiety and self-sabotage. www.silvamethod-canada.com

OCT 19, 20 & 21
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OCT 22, 29, Nov. 5, 12, 19
Dru Yoga classes with International Dru Yoga Teacher Trainer Padma McIntyre and Joshna Patel, Peace Centre, 1825 W. 16th Ave., 7-9pm. Series of 5 classes $78 + tax Drop-in $18 + tax.
Contact druevents@shaw.ca 604-936-3255.

OCT 22 – NOV 26
Is Life With Your Teen Driving You Crazy? Join our parenting group and regain a sense of confidence, control, and connection. 6 Wednesdays, 7-9:30pm Register by October 10 and save $25! 604-786-0709
www.kdkcounselling.com,
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OCT 25-26
Vancouver Health Show: Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre. Keynote speaker Sam Graci, 200 exhibits, 800 health experts, "Buying Event," seminars & more. Admission $10 or $8/seniors & students.
www.healthshows.com

OCT 28
Light Up Diwali 2008: Annual fundraiser for Maina's Home for Children, Nepal. Dance, yoga, music, Rangoli art contest, food, silent auction & more. 7-11pm, Heritage Hall 3102 Main Street. $10/single, $15/two. Children free. Info: 604-876-3994 ext 2
or glynnis@themysticmasala.com

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NOV 7, 8, 9
Radiant Mind: Awakening Unconditioned Awareness: with author Peter Fenner. Weekend Workshop, Masonic Hall. Free Talk. Booksigning Friday 6:30pm, sponsored by Banyen Books. Information: lynda@lyndacole.org, 604-926-6680.

NOV 16
Adam Dreamhealer: Intention Heals Workshop in Vancouver. Experience Self-Empowerment as Adam orchestrates 2 group healings, introduces his new book, Intention Heals and teaches techniques to focus your intentions toward healing and manifesting your desired reality.
All registration: www.dreamhealer.com

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Spiritual Centre for Dynamic Living. If you enjoy Oprah's Soul Series with leading spiritual teachers, you'll feel at home in our community. Sundays 11AM - Vancouver Planetarium, 1100 Chestnut St.
www.dynamiccentre.com

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

Laughter Club. Laugh as you have never laughed before and feel refreshed, invigorated, and relaxed. 3-4pm Open Door Yoga Studio, 1111 Commercial Drive. Info. farah@thesmilingyogi.com

Unity of Vancouver: Empowering people to create prosperity, health and loving relationships through the practical application of spiritual principles. Sunday Services 11AM, 5840 Oak St., Vancouver (604) 266-6281.

Free, anonymous, telephone support line: Guided meditations for people suffering from chronic pain. Non-religious. Counselors have community crisis line training. 7-11pm, 604-936-5683.

Unity In Action – The Church For Personal Growth – Dare to Prosper. Join us on Sundays at 11am. 1630 Edinburgh Street, New Westminster. 604-526-1421, www.unityinaction.ca

WEDNESDAYS

Dru Yoga classes with Darquise: East Side Yoga – 1707 Grant St at Commercial, 7:15-8:45pm. Series 5 classes $64 Drop-in $15.
Contact anahatabreath@shaw.ca 604-936-3255.

Hawaiian Medicine Circle 7pm Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks. $10 donation. At Hale Ola, 1215 Madison Avenue, Burnaby. 604-431-7474. Call Kamu Kaimana

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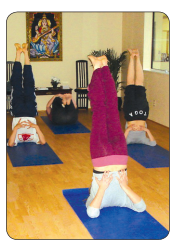

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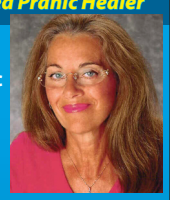

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Earthsong Group Meditation Circle: 7-8:30pm, Kitsilano. Entry level 8-session commitment. Intro session by donation. Shamanic, Taoist, Vedic. For first-timers not practising daily meditation. Pre-register 604-418-9636. www.shamanichealing.info

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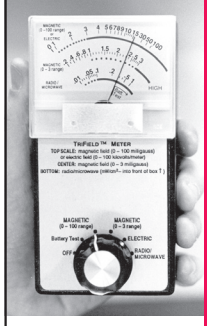

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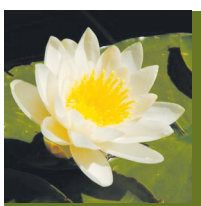

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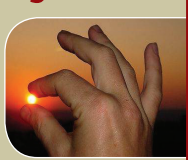

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Wellness Centered Dentistry

...Drug Bust from p. 6

credit to the NDP when they say that if they were paying for drugs, they'd at least look at "essential" medicines and ensure that those Canadians who carry a heavy burden of paying for drugs would get some help.

Where do the Liberals stand?

It's hard to say, but, like a lot of issues, the Liberals are stealing the best parts from the NDP. Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion promised a "national program to fund high-cost drug treatments for people who suffer from serious and chronic illnesses – a program aimed at extending coverage to provinces in Atlantic Canada that don't have provincial drug plans." Dion said the Libs would spend $900 million over four years and "ensure people in all provinces can afford expensive drugs like kidney cancer treatments that can run as much as $7,000 per month."

How about the Conservatives? Let's start by saying that many drug lobbyists are deeply connected with the governing Conservatives. In an article in the *National Post* on May 6 of this year, it was revealed that two high profile Conservatives were mired in the muck around the drug companies' efforts to restrict the availability of generic drugs. Then there was the stinky business about a former communications director for Stephen Harper, who became a lobbyist for the company that owned the vaccine for cervical cancer for which the Conservatives allocated $300 million.

There's no doubt that the brand name drug industry is one of the most powerful in Canada, and if anyone is keeping drugs out of the hands of Canadians (due to their high prices), it is those folks.

Let me add one final bit. There is a Conservative I'd vote for if he was running in my riding. Terence Young, who is running for the Conservatives in Oakville, is one of Canada's staunchest supporters of weapons-grade drug safety legislation. He's spoken publicly in favour of strong legislation supporting the recommendations of the Romanow Commission, especially the one about establishing a new Drug Agency for Canada to ensure Canadians are safer when using prescription drugs.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. He was recently interviewed on CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art on the subject of public funding of pharmaceuticals in Canada. You can catch this program at www.cbc.ca/whitecoat.
cassels@uvic.ca

On Track Zodiac

OCTOBER 2008 Adrien Dilon

ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
You seek to honour and affirm your individuality. When you contribute to the greater good in all matters, success approaches and the convergence is powerful. You also find helpers along the way to balance your creativity with sport and playfulness.

TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
Where there is opposition, rivalry and possible obstruction, you would do well not to suppress your emotions. If you can handle good, healthy competition, you thrive. If not, try to compromise and be more flexible with a give and take attitude. Accommodate all concerned while keeping your natural, personal drive intact.

GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
Some energy patterns now could create a mixed bag of sensory excitement. Some days, things run as smoothly as silk. Other days are provocative and as unruly as a murder of crows. Your potential for building bridges between mundane duties and life's challenges will bring you a new, inner calm. Your sense of humour is the key.

CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
Stay tuned to your creative process as you set your dial to function from a place of self-actualization. Your need to achieve is great and you can muster some of the heavenly hosts to assist you in honing your craft. Prepare to forge ahead in work mode while being constructive and artistic.

LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
Any outstanding debt should be settled and affairs handled. Damage control will minimize any problems down the road. Clear the slate of any misunderstandings. You have a lot to lose and much to gain so pick up the pace and bring your balance back to the centre.

VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
You may find that you succumb to depression and the role of victim. The need for seclusion could be tantamount, but hold the presses and let's cut to the chasteberry. In this time of great intensity, you discover what you really want by way of crucial self-awareness. Surrender, but stabilize your centre.

LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
Your mind is quick to learn new things, but, on the same note, confusion could cloud your intentions. Perhaps, you are overly eager and frustrated. Not to worry; this situation will only be a nuisance for a few weeks. In these times of turbulence, step back, have a nice cup of tea and watch the river flow.

SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
This is an excellent time to be with friends and participate in captivating conversations. Interviews go well and you desire to advance in your chosen field; you can make a great impression now. Your confidence gets a boost from Mars entering your sign. Carpe diem.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
You may be the glue that holds your family or home together and conflict resolution is required now. You could bring your positive energy to each set of problems and correct any negative influences that hamper your personal growth. The welfare and stability of others may be your true goal now.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
A little more effort is needed for you to move in your intended direction. Remember, the discipline you require to bring stability to your life is always awarded you in direct and indirect ways. You experience others' generosity while being generous yourself. Noble is your heart.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
Spiritual concerns have your attention, particularly now as you have a need for depth and perspective. Socially, you are finding it difficult to wear the face or the accoutrements that don't fit your personal vision. Time to diversify your inner portfolio. Is your financial outlook a mythology that doesn't match your convictions?

PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
As you beg for completion of the inner battle between your past and what you want in your future, you may have already given up. You must fight apathy with the yardstick of maturity. As Thoreau said, "To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of the arts."

Adrien Dilon is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 33 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing, *adrien.dilon@gmail.com*.

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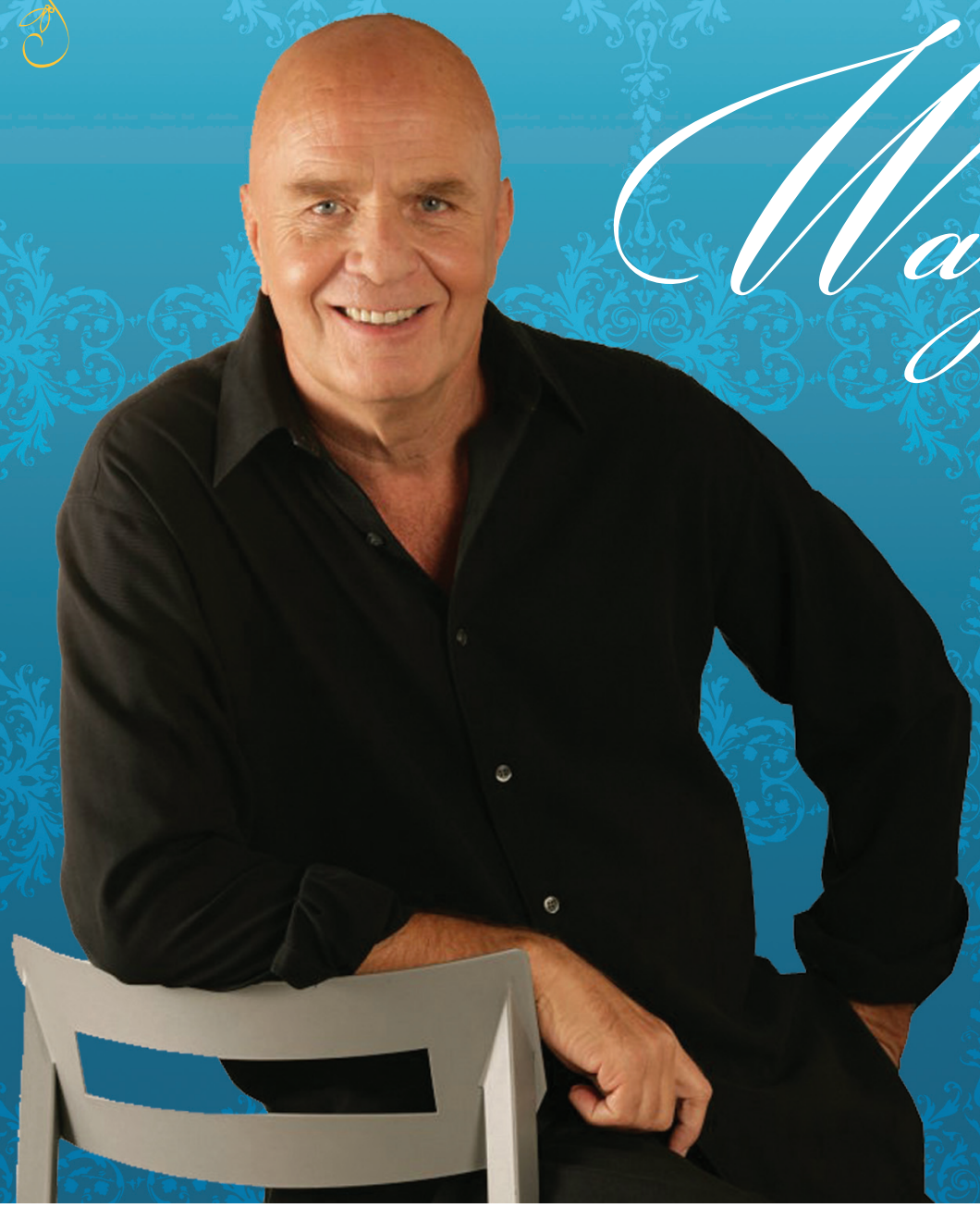

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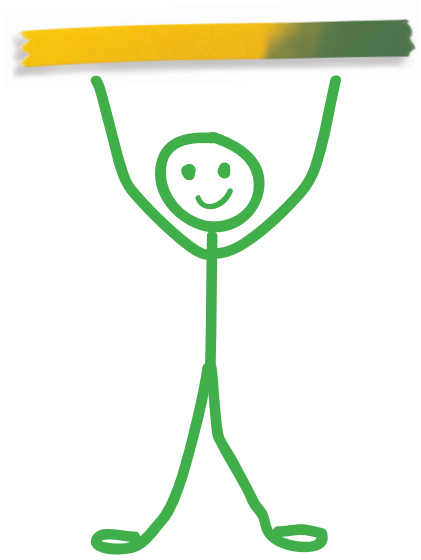

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